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10-Year Collection of Recipes Compiled in Zimmerman Cookbook

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DAYTON, Ohio — George Zimmerman remembers the first recipe in his collection. "It was Harriet Lightner's Blueberry Cheesecake, but I have no idea who the dear woman is," he says. "That's just what it said at the top of the mimeographed sheet."

Zimmerman, music lecturer at the University of Dayton and former music supervisor for Dayton Public Schools, has been collecting recipes ever since. He's compiled them in a new cookbook, called "Everything Makes Me Think of Food." Copies are $12.50 at the UD Bookstore.

He's an accomplished cookbook author. Over the years, through exchanges with colleagues, friends and neighbors, he gathered a vast variety of simple recipes for tasty dishes. Ten years ago, he decided to print a small booklet of his favorites and send them out as Christmas cards. The gesture was a hit, and Zimmerman continued each year with a new collection of recipes. A "Special Ghetto Edition" was written in 1991 for students in the UD neighborhood.

Some good-natured complaints about his booklet collection started to make him think about putting them all together in one compilation. "A neighbor said she couldn't find anything in those little books, although she knew the recipe she was looking for was in a green-covered one," Zimmerman says. "She wanted an index."

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So the new book has an index for its 180 pages, and it also has the hand-drawn illustrations, chatty instructions and delightful stories that have made Zimmerman’s booklets so popular. He recalls his Aunt Laura’s farm where the milk and cream came directly from the cow, his mother’s 1928 Ice Box Cookies (“they work in a refrigerator, too”) and other thoughts that sometimes revolve around food. Zimmerman calls them “little bits of yesterday.”

The recipes use common ingredients and the instructions are easy to follow. “They’re simple and you can prepare them with seasonings you have in your cupboard,” Zimmerman says. “Very seldom do I go out and buy an exotic spice.”

The title of the cookbook is apt. Any story told by Zimmerman is bound to include references to food. A recollection about a music history test evolves into a story about how he answered “zucchini” instead of “Sacchini” for the name of an Italian baroque composer. A tale about one of his early trips to Austria ends up being a story about ordering trout in a restaurant because that’s the only German word he recognized — he had sung Franz Schubert’s “Die Forelle.”

“Think about it,” Zimmerman says. “When you get back from vacation, the first things you tell people are what you saw and what you ate.”

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NOTE TO EDITORS: For media interviews, call George Zimmerman at UD at (513) 229-3917 or at home at (513) 434-1262. Zimmerman is a resident of Washington Township.